DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 044 251 RE 003 032

AUTHOR Schultheis, Sister Miriam
TITLE Building a Better Self-Concept through Story Book Guidance.
PUB DATE Jun 70
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Language Arts and Reading Conference, Ball State University, June 22-23, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.40
DESCRIPTORS *Bibliotherapy, *Childrens Books, Elective Reading, Independent Reading, Reading Material Selection, *Self Concept, Story Reading

ABSTRACT

Bibliotherapy, identifying with a storybook character, is one of the best ways for a child to gain insight into himself and to have a better understanding of himself and others. To begin this technique, it is necessary for the teacher to become well-acquainted with children's books so that he may be able to give capsule summaries of appropriate stories when the right time comes. The teacher might also categorize books for easy access according to children's problems and needs. Such categories might include problems of (1) appearance; (2) physical handicaps; (3) siblings, place in family, new baby; (4) acceptance by peer group or by oneself; (5) atypical unhappy home situation; (6) economic insecurity and unsettled living; (7) foreign or different backgrounds; and (8) need for diversion. Group guidance sessions are one of the best ways to introduce bibliotherapy. Examples of books corresponding to children's needs and problems and references are included. (CL)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED044251

RE003 032

BUILDING A BETTER SELF-CONCEPT THROUGH STORY BOOK GUIDANCE

Have you ever received a message that someone very dear has been in an accident or is seriously ill, and then tried to go on with your regular work? Did you have difficulty trying to keep your mind on what you were doing? Or if you were reading or studying, after half an hour did you give up because you could not concentrate; you didn't know a word you had read?

And what about Johnny or Mary or Susy or Mike who are listless or inattentive in school, who seem to be in another world? Do we scold them for being lazy, not wanting to learn? Children have their problems, too. While adults are often inclined to view the child's problems trivial, they are very real to the youngster and must be resolved before learning can take place.

When a child causes a disturbance in the classroom or on the playground, what approach do we take? Do we try to discover the reason for his actions? Jersild suggests that rather than try to transform him, it is better to help the child gain self-insight and to consider the consequences of his actions. (11:446) Dinkmeyer explains that an "unmet need" is frequently the cause of misbehaviour. (6:384) Tozier has observed that one of the fundamental needs of every child who has a problem is to know that he is not <u>alone</u>, to find that there are others who have similar problems. (14:4)

One of the best ways for a child to gain insight into himself, to have a better understanding of himself and others, is to identify

with a storybook character, an experience through which he shares the feelings of other human beings, feelings about their predicaments, their relationships, their joys, their sorrows. This process is known as BIBLIOTHERAPY, or storybook guidance.

Gray recommends the use of bibliotherapy in the classroom, whereby the child may discover how others face and solve existing problems. (9:489) It lies within the reach of every teacher, who need not be a skilled therapist, nor does the child need to be a seriously handicapped or maladjusted individual needing clinical treatment. Anderson explains that bibliotherapy can be preventive as well as corrective. (2:282)

How does one begin this technique? What approach should one take? First it is necessary to become well-acquainted with children's books, and the only way to do this is to read the books. Brief discussions about the book, telling the children what it is about in a snappy capsule summary without revealing the crucial points, showing enthusiasm while sharing the story, will accomplish much. Book displays, attractive bulletin boards, reading lists (suggestions, not "musts"), reading clubs, posted notices of story-related programs on radio and television, recordings and films, book review and discussions by children, role playing and dramatization, children's own illustrations of stories they have read--all these build interest in books and bring the right book to the right child.

Books for guidance might be listed in the following categories, with reference to a child's problems or needs:

1. Problems of appearance
2. Problems of physical handicaps

3. Problems of siblings, place in family, new baby
4. Problems of acceptance by peer group or by oneself
5. Problems of atypical homes, unhappy home situations, broken homes
6. Problems of unsettled living and economic insecurity
7. Problems of "foreign" or "different" background
8. Need for diversion (13:8)

Many of the books fall under more than one classification. The magic lies, not in the book itself, but in what happens between the child and the book.

A book that lends itself well to the teacher who is trying to use this technique is Garfield's Follow My Leader. Intermediate and upper grade children, after being introduced to the book, will want to read it themselves; younger children will enjoy having it read to them. Imagine several boys playing ball on a vacant lot on a Saturday afternoon, typical of almost any locality, any age group. While waiting for his turn to bat, Jimmy expresses his dream of one day being a professional ball player and joining the big league. Suddenly he notices the time and tells the fellows he must hurry home to help his mother, as she has so much to do since his Dad died. Urged on by the boys he plays a little longer; those few minutes that change his whole life. A firecracker explodes! Weeks later Jimmy learns in the hospital that he will never see again. The children will feel the agony of this discovery, the bitterness toward the boy who threw the firecracker, the guilty conscience that Mike feels and which seems to make him mean. Then there are those, including the wonderful German shepherd dog, who help make

adjustment possible for Jimmy so he can live a useful normal life in spite of his handicap. (8)

Group guidance sessions are one of the best ways to introduce bibliotherapy. One might begin with Felsen's Bertie Comes Through. One must help the children "feel" with Bertie Poodle, a friendly boy with round bright blue eyes, tossled straw-colored hair that would never lie down, fair pink-skinned complexion and pug nose, whose great desire was to be a top football player, but who was so short and so overweight that he was good only for "comic relief." The children suffer with and feel compassion for Bertie as he suffers defeat after defeat, and they admire his courage and humor as he never gives up. Other problems Bertie contends with are a tag-along little brother and a Dad who doesn't seem to understand that boys need to be accepted by their peers. Bertie becomes so conscious of his own problems that he fails to recognize how his remarks hurt a girl who is extremely tall and thin. (7)

In The Funny Guy, by Hogarth, children can feel with a girl who is very lonely while her mother spends months in the hospital, and who must take teasing from thoughtless boys and girls who do not realize what a heavy burden she is carrying in her heart. (10)

Screwball, by Armer, will appeal to those boys and girls who suffer from being compared to siblings who are more talented or superior in other ways. Mike, who always felt inferior to his twin, does not realize that he has been feeling sorry for himself. What a wonderful experience it is when he begins to know who he is, and that "it's all right to be that person!" (4)

The Worst Room in the School, by Muehl, will prove delightful

reading, and every child in the room will find a character with whom he can identify. He will also become aware of the problems of others. This book also appeals to the "new teacher." (12)

Fear grips the heart of many a child who will be better able to resolve his own conflicts when he reads Afraid to Ride, by Anderson, in which Judy wins back her confidence. (1)

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, by Dahl, will be enjoyed by younger children, and one need not moralize to help them understand what happens to children who disobey, who always want their way, who always want to watch TV (and here even the parents might learn a lesson). This is a book to be read to the children. (5)

Sometimes, as Arbuthnot recommends, the best guidance is no guidance at all, a "hands-off policy until the storm passes or the tensions are eased." The young reader, at such times, needs to be carried out of himself by becoming absorbed in a tale of humor or the unravelling of some exciting mystery. Sheer nonsense stories can relax tensions and bring as much cheer as a beam of sunlight on a dark, dreary day. (3:13)

Storybooks about everyday people, their hardships, their self-sacrifice and persistence when faced by great trials are valuable for guidance. They build a child's faith in himself and others. They foster joy in being alive, a desire to welcome each new day with renewed courage. Many of life's problems, large and small, can be lessened or solved through the pages of an appropriate book.

By: Sister Miriam Schultheis

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, C. W. Afraid to Ride. New York: Macmillan Company, 1957. (Paperback--New York: Scholastic Book Services)

Anderson, Paul S. Language Skills in Elementary Education. New York: Macmillan Company, 1964.

Arbuthnot, May Hill. Children and Books. rev. ed. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1957.

Armer, Alberta. Screwball. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1963. (Paperback--New York: Tempo Books)

Dahl, Roald. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.

Dinkmeyer, Don C. Child Development: The Emerging Self. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965.

Felsen, Henry Gregor. Bertie Comes Through. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1947. (Paperback--New York: Scholastic Book Services)

Garfield, James B. Follow My Leader. New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1957. (Paperback--New York: Scholastic Book Services)

Gray, M. "Books: Another Use in Our Classrooms." Education, LXXIX (April, 1959), 487-90.

Hogarth, Grace Allen. The Funny Guy. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1955. (Paperback--New York: Scholastic Book Services.

Jersild, Arthur T. Child Psychology. 5th ed. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960.

Muehl, Lois Baker. Worst Room in the School. New York: Holiday House, Inc., 1961. (Paperback--Katonah, New York: Young Readers Press)

Schultheis, Sister Miriam. "A Study of the Effects of Selected Readings upon Children's Academic Performances and Social Adjustment." Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Ball State University, 1969.

Tozier, Virginia. The Reading of Youth. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1960.